

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Nassau Hall

AND/OR COMMON

Nassau Hall, Princeton University

2 LOCATIONSTREET & NUMBER South side of Nassau Street, near
John Street, Princeton University Campus

CITY, TOWN

Princeton

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5

VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey

CODE

34

COUNTY

Mercer

CODE

21

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☒ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Trustees of Princeton University

STREET & NUMBER

Nassau Hall

CITY, TOWN

Princeton

STATE

New Jersey

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Mercer County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Market Street

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

STATE
New Jersey**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1936

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress-Division of Prints & Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE
D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

☒ EXCELLENT

☐ DETERIORATED

☐ UNALTERED

☒ ORIGINAL SITE

☐ GOOD

☐ RUINS

☒ ALTERED

☐ MOVED

DATE _____

☐ FAIR

☐ UNEXPOSED

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Nassau Hall, on the campus of Princeton University, was constructed 1754-56, after a plan prepared by Dr. William Shippen and Robert Smith of Philadelphia. Smith, a famous Philadelphia carpenter whose works included Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia, is credited with the lion's share of the design, and served as the supervisor of construction as well. William Worth, a local mason, is credited with the stonework.

The rectangular stone hall measured 177' in length and 55 & 2/3' in width, with three stories and a raised cellar. The north (front) side had three flat-arched doors reached by stairways which offered three separate entries to the building. The central doorway was set in a central section of five bays which protruded from the body of the building in the front and especially the rear. The central section was crowned by a simple pediment above the third story, which was pierced by a circular central window, and ornamented by urns at the three angles of the pediment. In the center of the hip roof Smith set a plain cupola with a weather vane, in the same manner as the cupola on Carpenters' Hall. Aside from these features and the flat key arches over the windows and doorways, Nassau Hall was a simple and unornamented building in a plain Georgian style. Its interior was composed of a central hallway running the full length of the building on the three main floors, with students' rooms and classrooms on either side of the hall. The central section housed a two-story prayer hall on the first floor at the rear, and a library on the second floor, at the front. In the cellar were the kitchen, dining area, and storeroom.

In 1802, a disastrous fire consumed Nassau Hall, leaving only the stone walls standing. The architect of the restoration was Benjamin Henry Latrobe. The major changes in Nassau Hall were few; they included a large square base for the belfry, which heightened the cupola, a large fanlight which replaced the circular light in the central tympanum, a raised roof, which allowed for transom lights over the doors, and triangular pediments, instead of plain, flat lintels, over the doors. Finally, Latrobe's new roof was covered with sheet iron, an innovative experiment which required reconstruction before it was successfully employed.

Once again, in 1855, Nassau Hall burned, except for its sturdy stone walls. Through John Notman's reconstruction of the building, Nassau Hall took on a pseudo-Italian Renaissance design of massive character. The first major change was effected at the eastern and western ends of the Hall, where Notman erected a pair of towers of stone, 10' square, interior measurement. The three story towers, which housed the stairs to the student lodgings, were topped with simulated Greek temples, which were removed in 1905. The second change was made in the central doorway (the two flanking entrances were walled in), which received a massive stone arch, framing double doors and a fanlight. Above the door a balcony was placed, extending from the third floor to the peak of the pediment. A massive, rusticated arch enclosed the window and fanlight, a smaller version of the Renaissance doorway below. The third major change was made in the reconstruction

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1754-6

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Nassau Hall, erected at Princeton, New Jersey in 1754-1756, and named in honor of King William III of the house of Nassau, was the first important collegiate building of the Middle Colonies and served as the prototype of many subsequent colonial college structures.

As the first permanent building of Princeton University, founded in 1746 as the College of New Jersey, Nassau Hall contained the dormitory, dining room, chapel, and classrooms.

Nassau Hall still serves as a vital part of the University, and presently houses the administrative offices.

HISTORY

Princeton University received a royal charter from George II under the seal of John Hamilton, Acting Governor of the Province of New Jersey, on October 22, 1746, under the official name, the "College of New Jersey." In 1752, the trustees decided to establish the permanent campus at Princeton, whose residents had raised 1,000 pounds and offered a tract of land. In 1754, ground was broken for Nassau Hall, and in the fall of 1756, Reverend Aaron Burr, Sr. and 70 undergraduates moved into the completed building. For nearly fifty years, Nassau Hall housed all the functions of the College.

During the Revolution, Nassau Hall served at different times as a barracks and hospital for Continental and British troops. It was the scene of the last stand of the British in the Battle of Princeton. In 1776 the first legislature of the state convened in it and, the first governor was inducted. From June to November, 1783, the Continental Congress sat in Nassau Hall. During this session it thanked Washington for his conduct of the war, received news that the treaty of peace had been signed, and officially received the first minister accredited to the new nation. In the course of its history, the Hall has been visited by scores of distinguished visitors, including virtually every president of the United States.

Nassau Hall was twice destroyed by fires which left only the walls standing. Benjamin Henry Latrobe restored the building after the fire of 1802, and John Notman did the same in 1856.

Nassau Hall today is devoted solely to administrative offices.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

New Jersey -- A Guide to its Present and Past (American Guide Series) (New York, 1946).
Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952).
Dorothy and Richard Pratt, A Guide to Early American Homes, North (New York, 1956).
Princeton University, "Nassau Hall 1756 (With some facts about its history, and the founding, name and early sites of Princeton University)" (Princeton, n.d.).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.4 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 528930 4466310
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION At the intersection of Nassau Street with Witherspoon Street, on the Southern curb of Nassau Street, proceed west 250'; thence 490' south; thence 400' east; thence 490' north to Nassau Street; thence 150' to the point of origin. These boundaries enclose Nassau Hall within the original limits of the university. The President's House was completed at approximately the same time as Nassau Hall and therefore is of Historical significance.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY

STATE CODE COUNTY

Landmark CODE
Designated: Oct 9, 1966
CODE
date

Boundary Certified
George T. ...
June 16, 1977

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE
6/17/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L. Street

TELEPHONE
202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE
D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

6/24/77

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

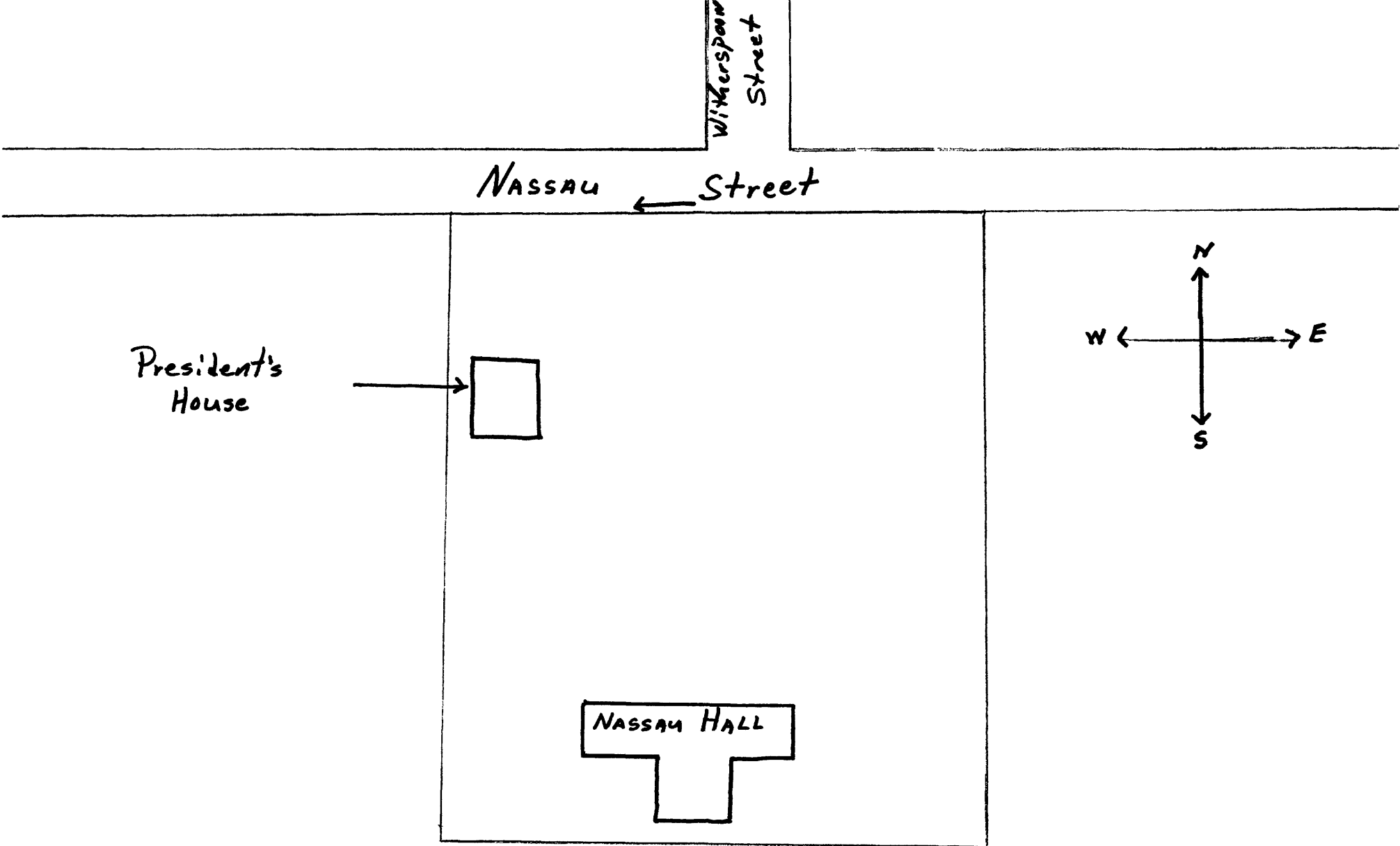
2

of the cupola. The new cupola retained the same position as the old, but increased greatly in size. From an octagonal base, which tapered by steps to a belfry surmounted by a smaller cupola, the new tower completed the external revamping of the Colonial building. The dome of the tower was made of cast iron plates; the roof and floor beams were also of iron, all in an attempt to fireproof the building. The major change inside the Hall was the reconstruction of the old prayer room or chapel, as the new library. This room measured 74' by 36' with a cove cornice 30' above the floor. Its double door, with its semicircular transom, is set on an axis with the front door.

On either side of the new library, Nassau Hall was partitioned once again into student lodgings, fifty-four in all. These rooms were centrally heated through nine furnaces located in the basement. The two side sections and the center section were each accessible only through their individual exterior entrances, for reasons of quiet and comfort.

Today Nassau Hall appears much as it did upon the completion of Notman's restoration in 1860. The terminal stories of the lateral towers have been removed, and the interior has been reapportioned in its conversion to administrative offices, but the stone walls which endured the Battle of Princeton and two fires, retain the basic strength and simplicity which characterised their original appearance.

The green which extends from Nassau Street up to Nassau Hall has been a feature of the building since its construction. Although it has been planted with trees in differing manners over the years, the present shady expanse differs little from the original.



Original Limits
of Princeton University
1756